

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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## THE NAILCAN RANGE IN JULY

I didn't really expect to be able to get out walking very much this time in Albury, as my main job was to be helping out as there is a new baby in my sister's house. I walked to the shopping centre a number of times and brought back some groceries in the backpack, to the constant sound of Pied Currawongs calling. There is a really beautiful big lemon-scented gum in my sister's back yard, and that was a favourite haunt for them. I noticed when I was walking that they tended to go from one gum to another, virtually ignoring the introduced species.

One day when all was relatively calm and I hadn't had a walk, my brother in law offered to take me up to the Nailcan Range again, and while I tramped up the steep track, he sat in the car and waited for me! It is a steep track, but the rewards are great on a day when there is sunshine and fleecy clouds. The views across the ranges can be quite stunning with shades of blue, purple, green and mauve dominating.

Along the track were masses of plants in bud, as well as Hardenbergia, already well covered in flowers, scrambling everywhere in a purple mass. The yellow and orange *Grevillea alpina* was out as well as a few other plants, including Slender Riceflower, Urn Heath, Hovea, and a Dillwynia.

This time there were quite a few birds too, as it was school hours and the trail bikes hadn't started. There were numerous Thornbills, mostly Striated as far as I could tell, Grey Fantails, Fuscous Honeyeaters, Spotted Pardalotes, Pied Currawongs and a Black-backed Magpie which approached me hopefully, and turned away with an air of disgust when all I pulled out of my pocket was a notebook to record him in! I went up to the range again on the Saturday with Doug, and added Weebills (several), Buff-rumped and Yellow-rumped Thornbills, and a Scarlet Robin to the list.

When the first trail bike arrived I couldn't help laughing, because in front of the rider sat a young dog with a very earnest look on his face and both front paws on the handlebars as they headed carefully up the track. I think he might have been a learner-driver!

Rita Mills.

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. *Grevillea alpina* is found  
(a) in the alps  
(b) over much of Victoria, but not the alps
  2. *Eucalyptus pauciflora* has  
(a) very few flowers  
(b) often flowers profusely
  3. Yellow Box has yellowish bark, Black Box black bark and Grey Box grey bark. Red Box has  
(a) red bark  
(a) grey bark
  4. For a South Australian, a Crimson Rosella is  
(a) a crimson colour  
(b) mostly yellow-orange some blue patches
  5. Jerusalem artichoke is native o  
(b) The Middle East  
(b) North America
  6. Chinese Scrub is native to  
(a) China  
(b) Australia
  7. Wimmera Rye Grass  
(a) is native to Victoria  
(b) is an introduced grass
  8. *Acacia longifolia*  
(a) has long leaves  
(b) does not have leaves
  9. The local Drooping She-oaks  
(a) are always female  
(b) may be male *or* female  
(c) are both male and female
  10. The local Bull-oaks  
(a) are always male  
(b) may be male *or* female  
(c) are both male and female
  11. Toowoomba Canary Grass is  
(a) a native of Queensland  
(b) an introduced grass
  12. Black Gum (*Eucalyptus aggregata*)  
(a) has smooth gum bark  
(b) is rough-barked, like a peppermint.
  13. White Ironbark (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*)  
(a) has rugged, hard, bark  
(b) is gum-barked.
  14. *Paronychia brasiliana*, which grows along Campbells Creek, has, for its common name  
(a) Brazilian Nailwort  
(b) Chilean Nailwort.
  15. Whitlow Grass is a member of  
(a) the grass family  
(b) the cabbage family
- E.P.
- Answers on page 7

## BIRD WATCHING AT MALDON

The Thursday morning excursion on August 19th was to the North British Mine at Maldon, and from here to the far side of Mt Tarrengower.

Small birds were plentiful, with birds in the trees, in shrubs, on the ground, on fences and in the air. We recorded 18 species within about half an hour. Pardalotes were easily seen - and we were able to see both Spotted and Striated Pardalotes together, close at hand.

Birds seen at the mine were

Kookaburra	Eastern Shrike-tit	Fuscous Honeyeater
Welcome Swallow	Blue Wren	Striated Pardalote
Grey Shrike-thrush	Grey Fantail	Spotted Pardalote
Blackbird	Weebill	Silvereye
Yellow Robin	Buff-rumped Thornbill	Red-browed Firetail
Golden Whistler	Striated Thornbill	Australian Raven

Birds were less numerous through Tarrengower, perhaps because so many hawks were seen. A highlight was to see two kestrels, diving at each other, high up.

Additional birds seen were

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Speckled Warbler	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Whistling Kite	Scarlet Robin	White-winged Chough
Brown Goshawk	Willie Wagtail	Grey Currawong
Australasian Kestrel	White-plumed Honeyeater	Magpie
Galah	Diamond Firetail	E.P.

## OBSERVATIONS

**BOOBOOK OWL** pair in the Botanic Gardens is still showing no signs of getting together on the one perch. White Cockatoos had been eating fruits and nipping off twigs of the roosting tree, which probably means the owls were considerably harassed during the day-time. (SP).

**IN FLOWER** at the August meeting were

Common Heath (Wombat forest)	Rough Wattle
Hardenbergia	Silver Wattle
Grevillea	Spreading Wattle
Hakea	Golden Wattle

**ORCHIDS IN FLOWER** on 26 August were Nodding Greenhood, Little Greenhood, Tall Greenhood, Snake Orchid, Waxlip Orchid, Blue Caladenia and Leopard Orchid (GB)

**BRONZEWING.** has demolished the final berries on a cotoneaster in the back garden at Hunter Street. (SP)

**BROWN GOSHAWK** was seen to fly off with a rabbit, on the east side of Mt Alexander. (EP)

**SILVEREYES** have been seen in Banksia flowers (BE)

**MANED DUCK** have been reported as investigating chimneys in the town, presumably for nesting sites. Localities have been Kennedy Street and Doveton Street (two houses) (BM, FS, JMCK)



**BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE** have been seen hovering at Harcourt (BE) and in the valley just north of the Technical College (EP).

**GOLDFINCH** has been seen in Kennedy Street, the first for some time (BM)

**PIE-FULL OF BLACKBIRDS.** Between 20 and 30 [probably exactly 4 and 20 - Ed] blackbirds are seen regularly at a Campbell Street garden. The garden is slug and snail free as a result, but the holly is stripped of its berries, and most of the cotoneaster berries have been eaten. (KT)

**MORE BLACKBIRD WOES.** "This week we had the first blackbird seen here in our garden, around the house" (at Faraday). (MH)

**FARADAY OBSERVATIONS** "Also in the garden the first Yellow Robin this season." "Matt has also reported seeing our familiar visitors mate - Grey Thrush. The thrush has been calling me out to fill a bird feeder if there is nothing to eat in it - most days for a couple of months. Today was the first time for its mate which was in a neighbouring tree and very shy - not tame - not happy to be within two feet of me in the garden front or back like the male." (MH, 23rd Aug).

**FANTAILED CUCKOOS.** First for the season seen on August 18th. A pair were seen on Aug 19, in Poverty Gully. They tend to perch where easily seen, in this case on a dead branch over the path. (GB)

**DIAMOND FIRETAIL** was seen in Smith's Reef. (GB).

**BUSH THICK-KNEE.** A report of a sighting, thought to be a Bush Thick-knee, from the Chewton area. (BT)

**AZURE KINGFISHERS.** A pair were seen along the banks of the Murray River (in N.S.W.) during a cruise on the "Kingfisher" during the WVFNCA campout at Barmah. The colouration is much more brilliant than that of the local Sacred Kingfishers (EP)

**BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL** was seen at the edge of the Pyrenees Highway, at the cutting near Mia Mia Road on 30 Aug. (EP)

## **PLANT CENSUS UPDATE**

The update Bulletin no 4.1 from the National Herbarium includes the following changes and additions.

**DELICATE HAIR-GRASS** has changed from *\*Aira elegantissima* to *\*Aira elegans*. The Silvery Hair-grass (*\*Aira cupaniana*) is an introduced grass that is very common in the local forests. As its name suggests, it is a small, delicate grass, growing to about 5 cm. The Delicate Hair-grass is very similar, but has even longer and more delicate branches, and has been recorded locally from Fryers Ridge. It would be easy to confuse the

two species, and Delicate Hair-grass may be much more common than this single-locality record suggests.

**COMMON GREENCOMB SPIDER-ORCHID.** "Much of what was previously called *Caladenia dilatata* should now be called *C. phaeoclavia*. This group is still in need of further study but it is clear that the true *C. dilatata* is very late-flowering, moderately large plant often with clubbed petals (recently given superfluous names *C. simulans* and *C. corynopetala*). With this taxon and *C. tentaculata* removed, the resulting smaller-flowered 'Greencombs' are tentatively referred to *C. phaeoclavia*". Presumably the local Castlemaine plants would have the new name.

**COUCH GRASS.** There has been some discussion as to whether Couch Grass is a native (cosmopolitan) species, or is introduced. A native variety has now been named. The introduced variety is *\*Cynodon dactylon* var *dactylon* and the native variety is *C. dactylon* var *pulchellus*. The native variety has shorter (less than 3 cm), fewer (2-4) spikes and slightly longer spikelets (to 3 mm) with dense appressed silky hairs along the keel. We will need to examine the local plants, to see whether we have the local variety.

**BENT-GRASS.** *Deyeuxia imbricata* collected from a Yellow Gum woodlands near Stawell is a new record for Victoria. This N.S.W. species could well occur elsewhere e.g. in the Castlemaine district. It has dense cylindrical flower-heads with spikelets 2-3.5 mm long, truncate lemmas with a very short subapical awn and no rachilla bristle. Reed Bent-grass, *Deyeuxia quadriseta*, has been recorded from Fryers Ridge and Shepherd's Flat.

**WATER RIBBONS** Four new species have been described. The former species *Triglochin procerum* was a variable species, differing markedly in size, and we may have a variety of species in this district.

**PURPLE OWL-CLOVER**, which was known as *\*Orthocarpus purpurescens* is now known as *\*Castilleja exserta*. This plant was found along the Muckleford-Walmer Road some years ago. Despite its name, it is not a clover but a member of the veronica family.

**RAT'S-TAIL GRASS.** *\*Sporobolus indicus* var *africanus* becomes *\*S. indicus* var *capensis*. Translated, this means that the African variety of Indian Dropseed becomes the Cape variety of Indian Dropseed. Rat's-tail grass grows at Harcourt North and near Sutton Grange.

**RUSHES.** Some unnamed rushes, (known as species "A" etc.) now have names.

*Juncus* sp A is now *Juncus remotiflorus*. This is perhaps the most widespread of the local rushes, and is found on moist ground.

*Juncus* sp O is now *Juncus semisolidus*. It has been recorded for Fryers

Ridge, Bells Swamp and further to the west. It is a stout rush (stems about 5 mm diameter), with continuous pith and bluish-green stems.

*Juncus* sp Q is now *Juncus psammophilus*. It is a very tall rush with narrow stems, and very delicate flowers. It grows north of Bendigo.

**NEW WEED SPECIES.** Some familiar plants have been added to the list of naturalised plants. These include

Canary Island Date Palm - established along the Ovens River between Mooroopna and Shepparton.

Aleppo Pine, *Pinus halepensis* - well established near Barwon Heads.

## SANDON IN JULY 1993

Seen at the bird bath were

Scarlet Robin (pair)	Brown Thornbills	White-throated Treecreeper
Grey Fantail (pair)	Buff-rumped Thornbills	White-eared Honeyeaters
Wrens	Striated Thornbills	Silvereyes
Weebills		

Seen on the property were

Little Pied Cormorant	Welcome Swallows (pair)	Yellow-faced Honeyeaters
White-faced Heron	Richard's Pipit (pair)	Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters
Pacific Black Duck (pair)	Hooded Robin (pair)	Fuscous Honeyeaters
Maned Duck (pair)	Yellow Robin (pair)	White-plumed Honeyeaters
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Jacky Winter (pair)	Brown-headed Honeyeaters
Little Eagle	Crested Shrike-tit	White-naped Honeyeaters
Brown Falcon	Golden Whistler (pr + imm)	Spotted Pardalotes
Masked Lapwing (pair)	Grey Shrike-thrush	Striated Pardalotes
Galah	Restless Flycatcher (pr)	Red-browed Firetails
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	White-browed Babblers	Diamond Firetails
Crimson Rosellas	Speckled Warblers	White-winged Choughs
Eastern Rosellas	Yellow-rumped Thornbills	Magpies
Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo	Varied Sittellas	Grey Currawong (pair)
Australian Owlet Nightjar	Red Wattlebirds	Australian Ravens
Kookaburras		

Susanna Starr

## ADDITIONS TO THE PLANT LIST

These species have been added to the Club's "Castlemaine Plant List"

**BLACKBERRY** *\*Rubus ulmifolius* For many years, the blackberries were recorded in the plant list as *\*Rubus fruticosus* sp. agg. Some specimens examined from west of Castlemaine (e.g. from Maldon, and from Lewis Road) appear to be *\*Rubus ulmifolius*. This species has elm-like leaves



(hence "ulmifolius"), and the under-sides of the leaves are densely-matted with a white fur. There are a few longer hairs growing amongst the matted hairs. Samples of local blackberries would be welcomed. A spray with leaves and flowers is needed for identification.

**BLACKBERRY** \**Rubus discolor* A specimen of blackberry from Belltopper Hill appears to be *R. discolor*. The undersides of its leaves are greenish. This species was also included in *R. fruticosus* sp agg.

**CANE WIRE-GRASS** *Aristida ramosa* This grass was found near the Faraday - Redesdale Road and Elphinstone - Sedgewick Road corner by Ian Higgins. It differs from Brush Wire-grass (*Aristida behriana*) in having a narrow panicle, and much smaller awns. It is usually found in northern Victoria, or in the northern States.

**SPOTTED MEDIC** \**Medicago arabica* Spotted medic is a clover-like plant with distinctive reddish-brown spots on the leaves. Like the Burr Medic, it has small yellow pea flowers. It is a widespread species, common in many home gardens and in waste places (e.g. Happy Valley Road).

**STRAWBERRY CLOVER** \**Trifolium fragiferum* Like Spotted Medic, this is a widespread species. It has pinkish flowers and the head has some slight resemblance to a strawberry. The calyx is inflated at maturity. It is well adapted to damp areas, and I have only seen it growing in poorly drained areas or along stream-sides.

**LONG-HEADED POPPY** \**Papaver dubium* This poppy resembles the Flanders Poppy, and grows along the Midland Highway near the Mt Franklin turnoff. The seed-head is elongated and narrower than the common garden poppy.

## **PUBLICATIONS REVISION**

Three of the Club's publications, Geology of the Castlemaine District, Street Trees of the Castlemaine City, and Castlemaine Bird List are now out of print. Revision is desirable, and suggestions for improvement, or corrections desirable, would be welcomed. Please contact Ern Perkins if you can help in any way.

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**Subscriptions 1993** Subscriptions were due in February.  
Single \$12, Family \$18, Student/pensioner \$8, Supporting member \$20  
Newsletter posted: subscription plus \$6.

**Committee:** B Maund (Pres), B Envall (VP), M Oliver (Sec), G Broadway (Treas), K Turner (Prog), R Mills (PO & asst N/L), E. Perkins (N/L ed), S Parnaby, C Morris and K Meehan.

**Quiz:** (b) is the correct answer for each question. Score of 0-2 = very good; you have a logical mind. 13-15 = you have a way with words; consider a career in politics.

## **CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM**

Excursions leave promptly at the times indicated.

**Fri 10 Sept. FIRE MANAGEMENT** Talk by Mr Les Vearing, Dept Conservation and Environment. High School at 8.00 pm.

**Sat 11 Sept. BOCA bus trip to Maldon**, with members of C.F.N.C. Bus leaves Melbourne at 8.30 am and should arrive at the Market car park in Forest street between 10.15 a.m and 10.30 am. Route is to North British Mine at Maldon, then to the west side of Mt Alexander.

**Thurs 16 Sept. BIRDWATCHING.** Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching outing. Meet Cont. Ed car park, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Leader G. Broadway.

**Thurs 23 Sept. BUSINESS MEETING.** 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell St.

**Fri 8 Oct. PAT BINGHAM "BIRD HABITAT - HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE GOT IT".** High School at 8.00 pm.

**Sat 9 Oct. FERNIHURST** via Bear's lagoon. Leader C Morris. Leave 27 Doveton St at 9.00 am. All day excursion.

**Thurs 14 Oct. CAPE BROOM PULL** in the western part of the Botanic Gardens, with Conservation Trust for Volunteers. Aim is to pull out seedlings before they set seed. 9 am start.

**Fri 15 Oct. CAPE BROOM PULL.** Day 2 of the broom pull.

**Fri 15 - Sun 17 Oct. Mt ARAPILES CAMPOUT.** See August newsletter.

**Thurs 21 Oct. BIRDWATCHING.** Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching outing. Meet Cont Ed carpark at 9.30 am. Leader P Munro.

**Sun 24 Oct. TARNAGULLA WILDFLOWERS.** Excursion with Maryborough FNC. All day trip. Take lunch. Meet SEC, Mostyn Street at 10.15 a.m. or Tarnagulla Toilet Block at 11.00 am.

**Fri 12 Nov. ROB WATKINS "NATURAL HISTORY IN THE EYES OF A PHOTOGRAPHER"** High School at 8.00 pm.

**Sat 13 Nov. TERRICK TERRICK.** Leave 27 Doveton St at 9.30 am.

**Fri 10 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT.**

**Sat 11 Dec. TRENTHAM** all day excursion. Leader S. Bruton.